



State's Pollinator Protection Plan Finished In Time for Growing Season

Release Date: 4/22/16

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MADISON – Wisconsin's pollinator protection plan is now complete and available to gardeners, farmers, beekeepers and open lands managers just in time for the growing season.

"This plan is a great resource and educational tool," says Ben Brancel, Secretary of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection. "It gives anyone who works with plantings and landscapes some best management practices to protect our pollinators, which are so important to our food supply and our ag economy. It's completely voluntary, based on the most current scientific research, and presented in a way that allows people to pull out just the portion that applies to their world."

The Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) contracted with the University of Wisconsin-Madison Entomology Department to develop the plan. It describes scientific data on risks to pollinators, and recommends best management practices, or BMPs, to protect them. Nearly 30 stakeholder groups had input, including beekeepers, environmental groups, agribusinesses, pesticide manufacturers, commodity groups, government agencies, and tribal governments.

The plan is available online at datcp.wi.gov; search for "pollinator protection plan".

DATCP released a draft plan in January for public comment. Those comments were duly considered and incorporated into the final plan; however, some of the comments suggested changes that are outside DATCP's authority or what the plan was intended to address.

There were 29 unique comments: 19 from individuals, 9 from representatives of organizations and agencies, and 1 comment received from 538 people in a coordinated action alert.

Some comments involved minor editing changes, and some complimented the plan or expressed support for it. Others addressed the length of the plan or missing information; authors have now edited for more concise language and added pertinent information.

Management restriction comments were shared with the relevant agencies and organizations that could implement them.

Brancel encouraged all Wisconsin residents to take a look at the plan. "Implementing the plan is not something any one person, organization or industry can do alone. Our collective actions will determine how successfully the plan's concepts are realized, and ultimately contribute to the health of managed and wild pollinators."

In Wisconsin, pollinators include managed non-native honey bees; more than 400 wild native species of bees; and other insects. News stories have focused on population declines among managed colonies of honey bees, but some wild pollinators like bumble bees are also declining. Science suggests that a number of factors are in play. For honey bees, the risks include parasites, pathogens and lack of genetic diversity. Both honey bees and other pollinators are affected by loss of habitat, inadequate forage, and pesticide exposure.

After Secretary Brancel participated in discussions about pollinators with his counterparts in other state agriculture departments at the 2013 meeting of the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture, the department applied for and received a Specialty Crops Block Grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to develop the plan.

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